El Camino College
Time to Completion 2015-2016

Executive Summary

This report examines the time students require between first enrolling and finally completing their intended educational goals to receive program awards (Associate degrees and certificates) at El Camino College (ECC). This report specifically focuses on the 2,937 program awards received by ECC students during the 2015-2016 academic year. Very few students appear to complete the requirements for a degree within their first two years (9%), and the median[1] time for degree completion is 4.3 years. Compared to degree-earners, proportionally more students completed the requirements for a certificate within the expected time (13%). The median time for certificate completion is approximately 4.5 years. When considering the total number of awards, more than half of the students (51%) require more than twice the normal time to complete their programs. Overall, the time to completion has increased compared to the previous academic year. This report examines various completion outcomes disaggregated according to gender, ethnicity, age, and units completed.

Introduction

Normal time to completion is defined by the amount of time necessary for a student to complete all the requirements for a given program award, assuming the student enrolled at a college-prepared level of coursework and maintains full-time enrollment. It is not necessarily based on the "average" or "typical" time to complete requirements; rather, it is a calculated based on expected coursework required of the program.

Time to completion in this report (when not presented as a number of years or academic terms) is represented as a percentage of the time a student required to achieve the award divided by the time expected to achieve such an award. For example, degrees typically require two years to complete. Students who complete their degree requirements in 2 years would be considered at 100% time to completion; students who required 3 years would be considered at 150%; students who required 4 years would be considered at 200%, and so on.

Because certificates vary in the normal time to completion required, certificate time to completion in this report is similarly presented as a percentage, rather than various amounts of years or academic terms. Students who completed their certificate requirements within normal time for that certificate are considered at 100%; students who required 1.5 times the normal time are considered at 150%; students who required 2 times the amount of normal time are

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[1] The **median** is the middle value in the full range of times to completion, where approximately 50% take longer than the median and approximately 50% take less time than the median.

considered at 200%, and so on. Time to completion is positively skewed (i.e., a small group of students take much longer to complete than the average), possibly due to students who enroll intermittently or otherwise take several years or academic terms to complete their program awards. Because of this, the median (rather than the average) is presently reported as a considerably more accurate measure for students' time to completion.

In the 2015-16 academic year, 2,937 degrees and certificates were awarded to students at El Camino College. For an overview of the time students required to earn their program awards, see Table 1.

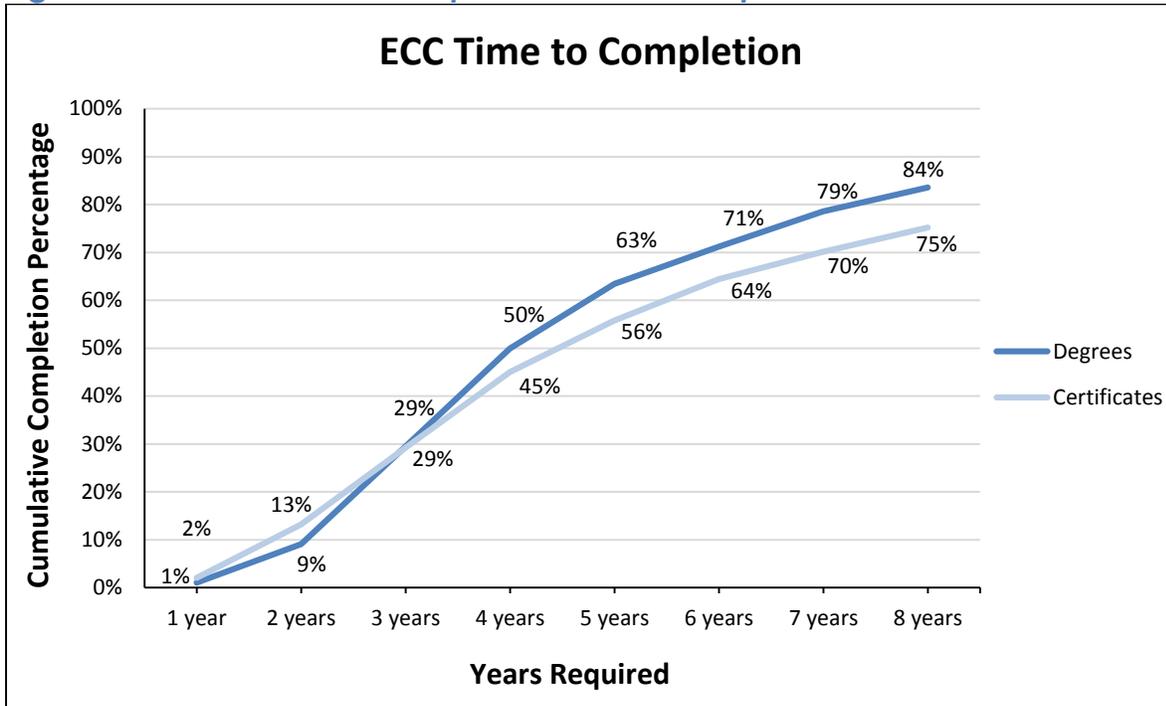*Table 1. Time to Completion by Location and Award Type (2015-2016)*

Award Type	Total Awards	Cumulative Percent			Median Years	Average Years (SD)
		100%	150%	200%		
Degrees	2,463	9%	29%	49%	4.3	5.7 (4.6)
Certificates	474	13%	29%	45%	4.5	7.1 (7.5)
Total	**2,937**	**9%**	**29%**	**49%**	**4.3**	**5.9 (5.2)**

Source: MIS. Because degree and certificate programs vary in length, time to completion is reported as a cumulative percentage of the "normal time" required for the degree or certificate. "100%" refers to students completing within the normal time; "150%" refers to all students requiring up to 1.5 times the length of normal time; "200%" refers to all students requiring up to 2 times the length of normal time. Standard deviations (SD) for average years required are listed in parentheses.

El Camino College

The time required to complete a degree at El Camino College (ECC) is generally a longer amount of time than the two years expected of most community college degree and certificate programs. Among ECC students who completed their degree or certificate programs in the 2015-2016 academic year, the time required ranged from approximately one semester up to 33 years. The median time to completion for degrees and certificates was 4.3 years. Among students who earned degrees, 9% completed their programs within 2 years, 29% completed their programs within three years, and 49% completed their programs within 4 years. However, (51%) required more than four years to complete their programs, with the average completion time being 5.7 years. Among certificate-earners, 45% of students completed within 4 years but the majority (55%) required more than four years to complete their programs. On average, completion time for certificate-earners was 7.1 years. Generally speaking, proportionally more students earn degrees at a faster rate than they earn certificates. For a visual representation of the time required for ECC students to complete their degree and certificate programs, see Figure 1.

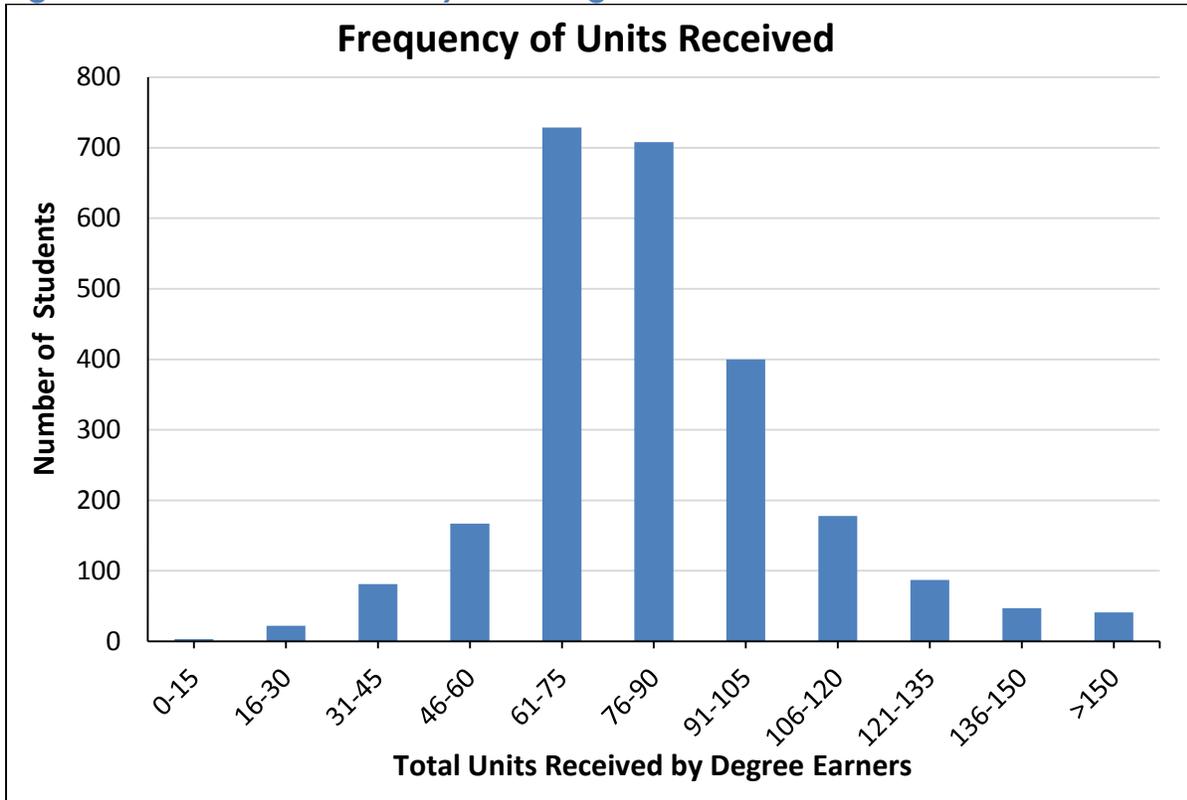*Figure 1. ECC Graduates' Required Time to Completion*

ECC Time to Completion

Source: MIS

Units Earned by Time to Degree

Degree programs at ECC generally award Associate degrees (i.e., Associate of Arts and Associate of Science). To earn an Associate degree, students must complete at least 60 degree-applicable units. Students are allowed to transfer units from other institutions, but at least 12 units must be completed at ECC or the Compton Center. Therefore, some of the students in the following data will have earned far fewer than 60 units (at ECC or Compton Center) prior to receiving their degrees. This section examines the intersection of the time required to earn a degree and the number of units students complete prior to receiving a degree.

Data is presented according to 15-unit groupings. These 15-unit groupings allow for a measurement of degrees earned based on a standard of approximately one semester of full-time enrollment (i.e., 15 units). In other words, the data can be examined according to how many semesters' difference from the 60-unit requirement a given student was. Figure 2 presents a histogram showing the distribution of total units received by ECC degree-earners at the time of their program award. Table 2 also presents this information, but is truncated to include students within one semester of the 60-unit requirement (i.e., 45-60 units earned) and students earning more than 90 units (i.e., students at risk of facing financial aid consequences due to taking too many units).

Figure 2. Total Units Earned by ECC Degree-Earners

Frequency of Units Received

Source: MIS

Table 2. Units Earned for Associate Degrees at ECC (2015-2016)

Units Earned	Number of Students	% of Degree Earners	Median Units	Average Units (SD)
Total	**2,463**	**100%**	**80**	**83.3 (24.7)**
45 or fewer	106	4%		
46-60	167	7%		
61-75	729	30%		
76-90	708	29%		
More than 90	753	31%		

Source: MIS. Standard deviations for average number of units are listed in parentheses.

The majority of students (59%) do earn somewhere between the 60 units required for the degree and the 90 units that put them at risk of losing financial aid. Although only 60 units are required to receive a degree, many students (90%) are earning more units than necessary. Students at ECC typically earn 80 units before receiving their degree, implying these students are taking at least an additional two semesters of coursework. The standard deviation is approximately 25 units, meaning that over 80% of degree-earners complete more than 58 units and over 95% of them complete at least 33 units at ECC.

Table 3. Time to Completion for Associate Degrees by Units Received

Units Earned	Number of Students (%)		Cumulative Percent			Median Years	Average Years (SD)
			100%	150%	200%		
45 or fewer	106	(4%)	41%	58%	67%	2.5	4.7 (6.0)
46-60	167	(7%)	32%	54%	65%	2.8	5.0 (4.8)
61-75	729	(30%)	14%	42%	62%	3.3	4.8 (3.9)
76-90	708	(29%)	1%	27%	54%	3.7	5.4 (3.9)
More than 90	753	(31%)	<1%	8%	27%	5.2	7.2 (5.2)
Total	**2,463**	**(100%)**	**9%**	**29%**	**49%**	**4.3**	**5.7 (4.6)**

Source: MIS. Student counts as a percent of degree-earners are listed in parentheses. Standard deviations for average number of years are listed in parentheses.

Table 3 presents an examination of degree-earners according to units earned and time required to complete the degree. Not surprisingly, students who receive 45 or fewer units while earning their degree take less time to do so. Generally speaking, the closer students are to the 60-unit range, the more likely they are to complete within shorter amounts of time. However, as the standard deviation of 4.8 years indicates, approximately 68% of 46-60 unit completers take between 0.2 and 9.8 years to complete. Similar results can be seen among the other groups.

There are several possible explanations for students requiring more than 90 units: they may have previously earned degrees and certificates, are pursuing a double-major, or possibly changed majors or were otherwise unsure about their educational planning when initially enrolling. Likewise, students who took such a long time to receive fewer than 45 units may have been students returning for a program award after leaving the community college's system for long periods of time.

Demographic Characteristics by Time to Completion

The following section examines time to completion in relation to the students' demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and age).

Table 4. Time to Completion by Gender

Gender	Number of Students (%)		Cumulative Percent			Median Years	Average Years (SD)
			100%	150%	200%		
Male	1,265	(43%)	11%	30%	50%	4.0	5.9 (5.6)
Female	1,671	(57%)	8%	29%	48%	4.3	5.9 (4.9)
Total	**2,937**	**(100%)**	**9%**	**29%**	**49%**	**4.3**	**5.9 (5.2)**

Source: MIS. Student counts as a percent of award-earners are listed in parentheses.

At ECC, women require about the same time to complete their programs as men. Though women have median completion time of 4.3 years compared to men's median completion of 4.0 years, both men and women require an average of 5.9 years. A smaller proportion of women complete their degrees in 100% and 150% time when compared to men, but these are differences ranging from 1 to 3 percentage points.

Table 5. Time to Completion by Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Number of Students (%)		Cumulative Percent			Median Years	Average Years (SD)
			100%	150%	200%		
Black or African American	300	(10%)	10%	23%	45%	4.7	6.7 (5.4)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	(<1%)	50%	50%	50%	5.1	5.1 (4.5)
Asian	550	(19%)	14%	41%	60%	3.7	5.0 (4.7)
Latino or Hispanic	1,434	(49%)	7%	26%	47%	4.3	5.8 (5.0)
Pacific Islander	20	(1%)	<1%	15%	45%	4.6	5.5 (2.4)
White (Non-Hispanic)	479	(16%)	11%	31%	47%	4.5	6.7 (6.1)
Two or More Ethnicities	120	(4%)	7%	28%	40%	4.7	5.7 (4.3)
Unknown or Declined	32	(1%)	9%	9%	9%	8.7	9.9 (4.9)
Total	**2,937**	**(100%)**	**9%**	**29%**	**49%**	**4.3**	**5.9 (5.2)**

Source: MIS. Student counts as a percent of award-earners are listed in parentheses.

There is large variation between ethnic groups in terms of completion time, but the median time required typically ranges from 4.5 to 9 years. On average, Asian students required the shortest amount of time to complete their programs. Asian was also the only group to have rates higher than those of the total group of award-earners. American Indian students also have higher rates, but their small numbers do not allow for significant comparison to larger groups. No disproportionate negative impact was found for time to degree completion.

Table 6. Time to Completion by Age Group

Age Group	Number of Students (%)		Cumulative Percent			Median Years	Average Years (SD)
			100%	150%	200%		
17 to 19	86	(3%)	64%	92%	98%	2.0	2.2 (0.8)
20 to 24	1,663	(57%)	9%	37%	65%	3.7	3.9 (1.6)
25 to 29	602	(20%)	4%	12%	23%	7.0	7.0 (3.2)
30 to 39	349	(12%)	8%	18%	25%	9.3	9.8 (7.2)
40 to 49	130	(4%)	7%	15%	23%	8.7	12.7 (9.8)
50+	107	(4%)	2%	7%	16%	7.7	13.2 (10.9)
Total	**2,937**	**(100%)**	**9%**	**29%**	**49%**	**4.3**	**5.9 (5.2)**

Source: MIS. Student counts as a percent of award-earners are listed in parentheses.

At ECC, younger age groups tend to complete their programs at quicker rates. These faster completion times among younger students may be explained by their likelihood of being "traditional" students. The largest group of degree-earners is the 20-to-24 year age range, and this group also completes quickly and with a high proportion of students completing within 200% of normal time. They only perform second best in terms of median years to complete when compared to the much smaller 17-to-19 age group. One characteristic of traditional students is the tendency to enroll in college immediately after completing high school, and if program completion at ECC requires approximately four years, this would place most high school graduates in the 20-to-24 year age range at the time of their postsecondary education award.

STEM and CTE Initiatives by Time to Completion

The following section examines time to completion according to specific program initiatives at ECC. The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) initiative focuses on programs related to the more scientific and technical fields, as classified by the STEM list provided by the Department of Homeland Security. For ECC, this typically means that programs in the divisions of Industry and Technology, Mathematical Sciences, and Natural Sciences are considered part of the STEM initiative. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) initiative concerns technical or industrial programs that are more career-oriented in nature. CTE programs focus more on building knowledge and skills related to particular technical professions, although there is some overlap between programs that are considered a part of the STEM and CTE initiatives.

Table 7. Time to Completion by STEM and CTE Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Students (%)	Cumulative Percent			Median Years	Average Years (SD)
		100%	150%	200%		
STEM	557 (19%)	5%	24%	48%	4.3	6.1 (6.1)
CTE	1,079 (37%)	9%	25%	42%	4.7	6.8 (6.3)
All Programs	**2,937 (100%)**	**9%**	**29%**	**49%**	**4.3**	**5.9 (5.2)**

Source: MIS. Student counts as a percent of award-earners are listed in parentheses.

On average, students in STEM programs tend to complete in a similar amount of time as students in all programs combined. Conversely, students in CTE programs tend to require more time than students in all programs. Generally speaking, STEM programs include more traditional courses (e.g., chemistry), while CTE programs include vocational courses that may be taken at a slower pace, especially if students enroll in these programs to build job-related skills rather than working toward a specific degree or certificate.

Conclusion

Students at ECC tend to require more than the two years that are expected to be necessary to complete the degree and certificate programs. In fact, more than half of the students required four years or more to complete their program awards. In addition, there appear to be student characteristics that influence (or are related to) variation in the time required to complete their programs. Most substantially, the age of the student and the number of units a student earns at the time of receiving their award seem to inform whether they complete in a shorter or longer amount of time. Overall, the time to completion for the 2015-2016 academic year has increased when compared to rates from the 2014-2015 academic year (i.e., overall median completion time has increased from 3.5 to 4.3 years). Compared to the previous year, El Camino College's average years required for degrees has increased by 1 year, and the average years required for certificates has increased by almost 1 and a half years compared to the previous academic year.